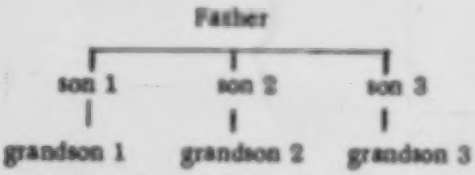
where they enjoy great esteem and are consulted every time on decisions concerning all the family, [91] such as the marriage of a child, because this is a matter of alliance with another tribe, or such as moving the village. Young people of a poor family who get themselves adopted may be incorporated into the family and assimilated among its children. The adopted son (mobi) gets a wife from the head of the family which has taken him in. This wife, however, is only loaned to him, and the children whom he may have do not belong to him and are regarded as being of the adopter's family whose name they receive.

Each family has a fetish all its own, which is handed down through the oldest sons. It is often a reed (ayan) which is planted behind the huts of the village where the family lives, by a practitioner in the course of an important ceremony. The practitioner digs a hole, puts into it the bones of a member of the family killed by the bivur, spits onto it some wild pepper that he has chewed, and, before planting the reed, says, "ke nzue, ke wone, me nga non we bemvama e duam ese dzah bor yfi, o ke sile e yenege" (without stealing or hiding myself I have taken from my ancestors, so that everything which will be asked of you by this family shall happen). The reed must be treasured and constantly kept clear of weeds which might grow around it. A fowl is sacrificed to this reed by the head of the family every time he wishes to undertake an important matter, and when the village moves the plant is taken along with the bones and replanted.

Social Life. Pahouin society is limited to a group of families which make up the tribe. The latter originates from a single family, the sons of which have left to establish other families in their turn. The separation occurs almost constantly in the third generation. The formation of a tribe may be diagrammed thus:



Grandson 1 establishes a family which keeps the name of the founder; grandson 2, a family which will take the name of this grandson; and

Gabon have given priority to recreating, the regrouping of villages being supposed, in their view, to take place as a function of the regrouping of the meyoñ.

The ayoñ includes all the patrilineal descendants of a common ancestor, the illegitimate children of girls belonging to the ayoñ, and adopted ones. The ayoñ has a name, a tattoo mark (ndan), often certain prohibitions (bityi, bidi), and perhaps a totem. The most strict exogamy is the rule. All members call themselves brothers (bəbenyañ).

Although there was, properly speaking, no real political division corresponding to the ayoñ, nor any organized chiefship—explicable particularly in view of the very scattered settlement pattern of the members—clan sentiment was, and still is, very strong. Periodical meetings, bisulan, bring ayoñ members together, presided over by the eldest (ntôl) of the senior lineage (mvôk, ayôm) (3). The custom

3, Ayôm probably has the same root as nnôm, pl. beyôm = male; it should be remarked that the ayôm is often designated by the name of a female ancestor.

of these bisulan has recently been revived /46/; first in the Cameroons, where the native authority was reorganized in 1945-48 along clan lines, then in Gabon, where the meyoñ are in an advanced state of disintegration, above all in the south.

An ayoñ, whose villages separated one from the other by villages of other clans sometimes extend over several hundred kilometers, is divided into segments (mvôk) that include the descendants of the brothers, or rather the sons, of the clan ancestor, then /is divided/ into lineages (bisa, meyôm) derived from the descendants of the sons of the ancestor of the segment. The longer the genealogy (mvam, nlañ bimvam; meba'a), the more vague these categorical differences become: in one place mvôk is used for what is called ésa nearby and ayôm further away. But, except in southern Gabon, the genealogies are still well preserved, and the majority of adults can trace their relationship, if not to the clan ancestor himself, at least to his lineage. The teaching of these genealogies, which was the core of the traditional training of boys, is dying out with the spread of schooling, but children still know at least the genealogy of their village-family (jal, dzal; nda bôt).

536 made, but this practice is only very rarely followed in cases of free
851 union, ébon, even when that is followed by a regular marriage of the
848 natural parents. Illegitimate children, fruits of an ébon, bobengon, are kept in their mother's clan, where, moreover, they rank socially only after legitimate children.

917 There used to exist a kind of adoption, rare today, of a political
614 rather than family nature, which could almost be defined as naturali-
641 zation. It could only be carried out by the head of an extended family on behalf of an orphan, mone nyui, of another clan (orphans within /56/ the clan being, of course, already considered children of the head of the family). The adopted child, abiaé môâ (i.e., "conceived [839] in the daytime," sexual relations being lawful only between sundown and sunrise), came into the clan with a status analogous to that of the monengon. He remained subject to the marriage prohibitions of his clan of origin.

609 A non-Pahouin outsider permanently residing in a village, a ntabe,
614 may benefit through marriage by alliance, élat, which does not thereby make him a member of the clan. He becomes a mouckal (sister's son, uterine relative) and his children, though legitimate, belong to their mother's clan.

583 The descent relationship may be broken by paternal or maternal
578 curse, meyo'é; the parent uttering the curse shows the child his sexual organs, "the place whence he came," while pronouncing a formula oath. The curse is supposed to bring misfortune and death to the offspring accursed, whom everyone avoids. It can only be [783] lifted by a collective purificatory rite (étye, tyô) in which the whole nda bôt participates.

3. Age Grades

561 The individual's life cycle is marked by a certain number of transitions, which are accompanied, or were usually accompanied, by rites that will be discussed further on (p. 115). These crises are birth, weaning, puberty, attaining majority, marriage, death. Age grades correspond to the intermediate stages; they are less strictly defined today than formerly.

561 I do not know the exact word for fetus: people say abum, belly.
443 There must be a more precise term, but I think there is a prohibiton connected with it, certainly as regards men, although it may now be

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553 arrival of a stranger. Hence, a certain number of names that at first would seem totemic, because they copy the names of animals and plants, are not so at all. In general, the eldest son's name is that of one of his forebears, a grandfather or ancestor, who is thought to come to life again in him. Twins, however, always receive special names of matched things, which go in twos, like Sun and Moon, Wind and Rain, Storm and Thunder, etc.

As soon as the child has been given a name, his father takes it in his arms and carries it into his hut, where he opens the évora biéri and puts the baby down on the lid. He then takes the ancestral skulls one by one and puts them on the child's head, then places the family totem in its hand. The father with his fingernail often scrapes a bit off of the antelope horn holding the remnants of his personal totemic sacrifice, and puts some of this into the child's mouth. This, strictly speaking, is the dedication to the totem. The father then takes the baby back to its mother so that she may anoint it with oil and rub it with red wood. After the mother, or any other woman present, has attended to this, the father again takes the child and puts another bit of the totem into its mouth. A she-goat, a sheep, or at least a fowl is then offered to the family totem and to the spirits of the departed, according to sacred ritual. The remains of this sacrifice, the ashes, etc., are enclosed in a small antelope horn, which is hung around the baby's neck or above his genital organs: this will be his amulet. Finally, the father gives the baby his personal totem, which will be recalled to him later on when he is old enough to understand. At that same time he will be taught what are the family, clan, and tribal totems, and the duties and obligations they impose on him. This instruction is part of the mébara. [572]

2. Adoption

597 727 In certain cases, a few children are adopted by a head of the family when given as ransom for murder or spared in the

597 727 sacking of a village. For, although in such cases all the men and able-bodied youths are ruthlessly killed and eaten, this does not apply to women and children, even to male children, who henceforth belong to the new tribe and will later be looked upon as warriors. There is no ceremony for women or female [562] children, since, as we have seen, the totem ignores them, and they have only one duty toward it, to hide in their huts as quickly as possible whenever there is talk of the totem, and never to mention it. Should this nevertheless happen, it would be an offense requiring expiation.

597 Male children are adopted by the various heads of a family. Tribal or village chiefs have first choice, the rest of the warriors come after. The one or more children chosen by a chief, however, may never succeed him.

597 344 Adoption ceremonies are like those at birth. The adopted child loses all his old totems in order to acquire those of the tribe he joins. There is just one additional ceremony, blood-letting. So as to prove his definitive entry into the tribe, he undergoes the following operation when led before the totem. With the mfor knife, a small steel blade kept for this purpose, the adoptive father makes a few slight scarifications on the child's left arm, collects the blood that flows, and throws it on the ancestral skulls, then on the akaméyón. He then takes a fragment of skull and some totemic sacrificial ashes and rubs these vigorously on the child's arm. This is the true sign of adoption, by which the boy definitively enters his new family and is recognized as belonging to it entirely. Later on he may even be allowed to take a wife from his former tribe, in spite of the strict law of exogamy, because adoption is so authentic.

[848 563] Often the same bloodletting and blood alliance occur with illegitimate children or with mulattoes, but the object is then different. Adoption never takes place at birth but much later, so as to ensure for the child the ancestors' protection.

The same act often occurs when a child is ill. [573]